
Bulgarian Soldier Takes on Drill Instructor School, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, South Carolina

**By
Caitlyn Carr
Drill Instructor School Marine Corps Recruit Depot,
Parris Island, South Carolina**

Most Marines attending Drill Instructor School will remember the rigorous training as one of the biggest challenges in their lives. With a tough physical training regimen, an even tougher staff and a demanding academic schedule, these three months are anything but easy. For Staff Sergeant Yavor Behar, Drill Instructor School presents one obstacle other students do not face: he is still learning to speak English.



A U.S. marine corps instructor working with Bulgarian Army Staff Sargent Yavor Behar, a Marine Corps Drill Instructor School student. Staff Sargent Behr is held to the same standards as American students in all areas including drill, academics, leadership, and physical training.

Behar, is a member of the Bulgarian Army, arrived in the United States three months ago as part of the International Military Education and Training Program, unaware of what would lie ahead. "I volunteered to be on any mission overseas, and I expected to be sent to Iraq or Afghanistan," said Behar.

Instead, he was sent to San Antonio, Texas to learn English at the Defense Language Institute, English Language Center for two months before reporting to Parris Island. Behar, like nineteen other students who have completed Drill Instructor School since 1985, is expected to develop skills that will enable him to train soldiers in his own army and help to reform and modernize his country's non-commissioned officer corps, according to Gina Douthit, European Command and Southern Command Program Manager at the Coalition and Special Warfare Center.

Although his thick accent and foreign camouflage utilities prevent him from blending in with his platoon, Behar is held to the same standards as the rest of his classmates of Drill Instructor School Class 4-2003. "We do not set him aside or give him any special treatment," said 1st Sgt. Sandra Torres-Pintos, Drill Instructor School first sergeant. "The language barrier sometimes creates a problem, but when that happens we manage to communicate through show and tell movements."

Using this unique learning style, Behar manages to perform as well as most of his peers. As is the case with many students, physical training is extremely challenging for him, but he does well academically and works hard to keep up with his American counterparts, Torres-Pintos added.

One of the academic requirements Drill Instructor School students are expected to meet is the verbatim memorization of the entire Drill Manual, said Torres-Pintos. She explained that this is one area where most students fumble, spending a lot of their free time studying and practicing drill movements. When the rest of the Drill Instructor School students see that Behar is pushing himself to perform such a task they become more motivated. "He gives them a sense of motivation because English is his second language, and if he can do it, they can too," said Torres-Pintos.

While his presence may be a source of inspiration to the Marines he trains with, Behar acknowledges that he is also dependent upon his classmates. "I would be lost without them," he said. "We have not had enough free time to make real friends yet, but in class we always work as a team to succeed."

The lack of free time he has as a student prevents Behar from doing any traveling outside of Beaufort, but he still said that he is amazed by American culture. Shopping in the various departments at the Main Exchange and Commissary as compared to the small shops in Bulgaria, "where there is a whole store just for socks, is just one example of the difference in cultures," Behar said.

**Drill Instructor School
Marines Corps Recruit Depot**

- Approximately 500 students from around the world are trained every year in various schoolhouses throughout the Marine Corps.
- Military personnel from various countries have competed Drill Instructor School, including Cape Verde, Haiti, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Tonga and the United Kingdom, and twelve more are expected to enroll in fiscal year 2004.
- Training foreign servicemen in Drill Instructor School and other Marine Corps courses helps the U.S. to promote working relationships with other nations, and assists many countries in receiving invitations to join North Atlantic Treaty Organization.
- U.S. Marine non-commissioned officer's also travel to other nations, assisting in the establishment of non-commissioned officer academies and instructor cadre.

Although Behar says that he is fascinated by America, he nostalgically refers to the young fiance he left in Bulgaria, and adds that he craves European espresso and yogurt, things that he can not find in this country.

The climate on Parris Island also leaves him longing for Bulgaria, where he says there is less humidity, more mountains, and usually a cool breeze that is non-existent in South Carolina.

The difference in culture, traditions, and environment in the two nations is even more dramatic for Behar when he compares his experience in the Marine Corps to his life in the Bulgarian Army. In Bulgaria, all males perform one year of mandatory military service, which includes forty-five days of training in an environment similar to boot camp, said Behar. Behar has been in the military for seven years, and says that he will serve for at least seven more. "Everything is different here," he said. "There is not one similarity, and adapting to all of the changes is the most stressful thing for me."

Since most of the drill movements and academic knowledge that Behar learns at Parris Island, North Carolina, are not used in Bulgaria, he said that he may not use those skills immediately once he leaves the United States. More importantly, he said he will use his time management

skills and acquired ability to quickly adapt to stressful environments, critical ingredients for success at Drill Instructor School.

Upon the successful completion of Drill Instructor School, Behar will report to Camp LeJeune, North Carolina, where he will commence training in the Infantry Platoon Sergeant's Course at the School of Infantry, said Torres-Pintos. "My goal during all of this training is to be professional," Behar said. "I want to do what is required of me and complete every assignment like a professional."

Behar's attitude reflects impressions he has of the Drill Instructor School instructors, who he said are highly professional, very experienced, and have dedicated their lives to training the students.

His own dedication to the goal of professionalism can be observed while watching him train, as he practices various drill movements with his peers, repeating each ditty with intensity. Sometimes, he hesitates or stumbles over words, trying to decipher the slang he did not learn at the language institute, but he corrects himself promptly when the staff points out mistakes. "Drill Instructor School is the most stressful thing that I have ever done, but I know that it will help me in my career and personal life," said Behar. "I know the training here has to be tough, because after this training, other things I do in life will be easy."

If not for the unfamiliar uniform and accent, one might mistake Behar for any other recruit or Drill Instructor student living on Parris Island, struggling to make it through each day, but keeping his eyes on a bright future. Everything is different here. There is not one similarity, and adapting to all of the changes is the most stressful thing for me." Staff Sgt. Yavor Behar, Bulgarian Army.